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U.S. spy worries continue despite expulsions

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NEW YORK — President Reagan's expulsion of Soviet diplomats has hampered an extensive Kremlin spying effort in New York, but the United States is worried by mounting Soviet abuses within the United Nations apparatus, U.S. and U.N. sources say.

Some officials in the secretariat that administers the world organization dismiss many of the U.S. charges and argue that internal controls prevent such Soviet manipulation. One European described the U.S. charges as "James-Bondish fantasies."

The Senate Intelligence Committee, however, alleged that, "The KGB has succeeded in infiltrating its officers into the U.N. bureaucracy, with some reaching positions of authority."

Senior Western sources in the secretariat told Reuters that Washington should be less concerned about Soviet spying inside the United Nations and more alert to a systematic effort to direct U.N. activities toward Soviet ends.

"Their No. 1 goal is the dissemination of propaganda under the flag of the U.N.," one source said. To do this, Moscow exercised influence over several U.N. divisions through its own citizens and East Bloc or other surrogates.

Soviet citizens traditionally serve as undersecretary-general in charge of political and Security Council affairs, a post now held by Vyacheslav Ustinov. In 1978 Arkady Shevchenko defected while in the job and later described Soviet U.N. strategy in his memoirs.

The Senate report pointed a finger at another high-ranking Soviet official, Vladimir Kolesnikov, an assistant to Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar. It described him as a "KGB China expert."

Mr. Perez de Cuellar strongly defended Mr. Kolesnikov, saying he was a competent official whose integrity had been impugned because of his nationality.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar's spokesman Francois Giuliani told Reuters there was little spying inside the United Nations, and, if evidence was produced, action would be taken.

U.S. officials say the expulsion of 25 diplomats from the Soviet New York mission last month dealt a major blow to the operations of the KGB and GRU (military) espionage agencies.

The KGB, GRU and the Soviet Foreign Ministry also control the 400 Soviet citizens who work in the secretariat, although they are sworn to neutrality as international civil servants, according to U.S. officials.

"Approximately one-fourth of the Soviets in the secretariat are intelligence officers, and many more are co-opted by the KGB and GRU," the Senate committee said, quoting from a declassified CIA report.

It said the Soviet "strategy and tactics of personnel placement is unique in the U.N. system" and commented that Moscow netted \$20 million a year in kickbacks by Soviet U.N. staff to their mission.

One secretariat official, who asked not to be identified, said some

Soviet secretariat staff members made little effort to cover their double lives as intelligence operatives in New York.

"They take long periods of sick leave and come back with a certificate from the Soviet doctor saying they have had chicken pox or something," he said.

"They even show up for work with two raincoats, wearing one in and the other out. They think it will make it harder to follow them."

The Americans decided to take action against the mission and the Soviet embassy in Washington after a rash of unsettling spying cases over a two-year period. Last March, Washington ordered the Soviet mission to cut its staff from 275 to 150 by 1988 in six-month increments.

When Gennady Zakharov, a Soviet U.N. employee, was arrested in August for alleged spying and the Soviets later arrested American reporter Nicholas Daniloff on similar charges, Washington named the first 25 to leave the mission.

Intelligence sources said they included the station chiefs of the KGB and GRU and senior officials on their staffs.

Similar action was taken against the Soviet embassy in Washington and San Francisco consulate last month.

The sources told Reuters the moves were a victory for the FBI and other agencies that had long argued there were far more Soviet agents than they could keep watch on.

Angered by the extent of alleged Soviet spying in the United States, President Reagan overruled the case for restraint voiced by both the State Department and the CIA, which feared the consequences for their own Moscow operations.

"It's probably the end of an era as far as Soviet operations in the United States are concerned," an FBI official said last month.

But Moscow is waging a campaign within the United Nations to have the U.S. action decreed illegal. U.S. lawyers say it is within the "host country's" rights to limit the size of missions to international organizations.

"The figures are in granite, and they will be down to 150," Robert Moller, who represents the United States in the U.N. Host Country Committee, told Reuters. The committee is about to rule on the U.S. move.

Among Soviet responses is likely to be the appointment of a tougher ambassador to replace Alexander Belonogov, who has held the job for only five months. The new man is expected to be Vasily Safronchuk, a well-known and capable Foreign Ministry veteran who is now No. 2 at the Soviet mission, according to East bloc sources.

Mr. Safronchuk stood in as mission chief during the initial expulsions earlier this year and cut a more forceful figure than the more self-effacing Mr. Belonogov, diplomats say.

In the face of strong Soviet protests, Washington recently imposed the same travel restrictions on Soviet secretariat staff as on Soviet mission personnel, barring movement more than 25 miles from New York without 48 hours notice and prohibiting all travel to a large part of the United States.

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